

2003 Session Review



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Dear Neighbors:

The 2003 legislative session came to a close on June 11, after completing its regular 105-day session and two special sessions. Although it took a special session to finish our work, I believe the final product for our state is well worth the extra time spent to do it right.

The session began with unlimited opportunities for our state to see positive changes. I believe the Legislature rose to the occasion and met our state's challenges head-on. We worked together and made significant reforms in how we build the state's budgets as well as our roads. We also made great strides in improving Washington's business climate so that we may recruit and retain employers and the jobs they create well into the future.

This newsletter highlights some of the major issues this session. I hope you'll take a few minutes to review it. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or comments. Hearing from the many 41st District citizens who have contacted me has been extremely helpful. I value your opinion and hope you will continue to take the time you take to help me understand how state actions affect our neighborhoods.

Sincerely,

Fred Jarrett
State Representative
41st Legislative District

INSIDE:

- 2003 Budget success
- Flexibility and protecting the quality of education
- Improving the economy
- Commitment to improve Washington's roads

Rep. Fred Jarrett

41st District

2003 Budget success – Closing the \$2.7 billion budget deficit without tax increases

I have always felt strongly that the state operating budget should be based on a clear-eyed forecast of the state's economic performance and the future needs of the state, while protecting those most vulnerable in our communities. I'm pleased to report that through a bipartisan process we were able to adopt a balanced budget without increasing general taxes.

Even without increasing general taxes, the 2003-2005 budget maintains the same level of funding for K-12 education and preserves a safety net and current levels of service in most areas of state programs.

Balancing the budget during difficult economic times does not come without a cost, however. Some will see a reduction in state services, and the planned increases in K-12 investment under Initiative 728 were postponed. And while teachers in their first seven years of teaching will receive pay increases, cost-of-living adjustments for all other state employees were delayed. In the end, I believe the budget we adopted is responsible and sustainable – two critical components needed to avoid future deficits.

Here's what we were able to accomplish without raising taxes:

- Teachers in the first seven years of their careers will get a deserved salary increase.
- By the second year of the budget, starting teachers will earn more than \$30,000 a year.
- The budget includes \$30 million more for class-size reductions than the governor originally requested, boosting the per-pupil grant to \$254 per student.
- Colleges will be allowed to increase in-state undergraduate tuition by up to seven percent in each of next two academic years.
- The state-subsidized Basic Health Plan for the working poor will provide for 100,000 people – an increase of 40,000 over the governor's proposal.
- The budget funds parks – no additional parks will be closed.
- The budget provides funding for county health departments.

Providing greater flexibility for colleges and universities to protect the quality of education

The Legislature succeeded in providing our colleges and universities with more flexibility to protect educational quality. The reforms we adopted are designed to hold colleges and universities, along with the Legislature, more accountable.

Creating a first-class university and community college system depends upon university and college leadership and the Legislature all working together, and requiring all be held accountable for results. I'm pleased to have prime-sponsored House Bill 1909, legislation to reform how community colleges and universities work together to improve students' ability to transfer from a two-year to a four-year university. This new law autho-



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rizas a pilot project to define competency-based standards for those students wishing to transfer. The result is students being evaluated by what they know, not how long they spend in the classroom.

Another bill I co-sponsored (**House Bill 2111**), also signed into law by the governor, establishes a task force to study the possibility of implementing performance contracts between the state and its colleges, universities and technical schools. Performance contracts will help institutions be more successful in educating students and assure the state has a high-quality, cost-effective system. The task force will study the experience of other states that have used performance contracts and determine whether implementing them in Washington would require changes to existing law. The new law provides an exciting opportunity for legislators and educators to work together to create a comprehensive approach in funding higher education.

Improving our economy by improving the business climate

I was proud to be a member of the legislative team created to work with state agencies, local governments and non-profits to help develop a proposal to keep Boeing and its 7E7 jetliner project in Washington. The experience turned out to be one of the more rewarding of my legislative service. Our team met several times each week to develop a legislative proposal designed to help retain Boeing as a signature industry for our state. In the end, we proposed and the Legislature adopted, a package to improve the environment for all employers.

In addition to a package of tax incentives that will only go into effect when Boeing commits to building the 7E7 in Washington, it includes a more equitable unemployment insurance and worker's compensation system that will help all businesses. I think the legislative package, signed into law by the governor, makes Washington a strong competitor for the 7E7. Additionally, if we are not selected as the state to build the 7E7, taxpayers will still benefit from long overdue reforms in state government.

Making the commitment to improve Washington's roads

The legislature committed to investing in the future of our state by passing the first gas tax increase in more than a decade. Both the House and Senate passed the budget in a bipartisan effort. The transportation budget passed by the Legislature and signed into law by the governor is an important first step in reversing 13 years of declining investment in transportation infrastructure.

Transportation budget highlights:

- \$3.4 billion in highway improvements through a five-cent increase in the gas tax and 15% increase in truck weight fees.
- \$600 million in flexible funds supporting intercity rail, transit and ferries funded by a title transfer fee.
- Comprehensive performance audits for the Department of Transportation, including an independent citizen oversight board composed of members with experience and expertise in construction, engineering and related skills.
- Reforms to transportation contracting methods, including private sector techniques such as "design-build."
- Expanded contracting-out to use the skills and resources of the private sector.
- More options for passenger-only ferries.
- Financing equity for the Regional Transportation Investment District, and the ability to bond against voter approved revenues.



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41st District

I'd like to hear from you!

If you have questions or ideas about issues being addressed by the Legislature, please provide the information below. You may also contact me directly via e-mail at jarrett_fr@leg.wa.gov. I'll be **out and about in the community attending events, meetings and the like. Please feel free to let my office know of any meetings or events that are scheduled to occur and for which you'd like my attendance or participation.**

I look forward to seeing you and hearing from you during the upcoming months!

Name _____

Address _____ and/or

E-Mail _____

Comments: _____

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